

# Laying the Black Bogie of Bolshevism in America

## All Fears of Its Spread Here Groundless—Our Soldiers Unmoved by the Russian Propaganda

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IT REQUIRES a degree of assurance bordering on effrontery to attempt any social forecast or prediction in times like the present. Things are happening so fast, changes are following so rapidly one upon the heels of another, upheavals in the social order are so frequent and recurrent, that he who would play the rôle of a sociological prophet finds the task one of enormous difficulties. Herbert Spencer once remarked that no one is wise enough to prescribe the course that society will take; in these days no one is wise enough even to guess at it with any feeling of confidence. Accordingly, this effort to appraise roughly some of the conditions, tendencies and indications that may throw light on the prospects of a Bolshevik uprising in the United States is submitted with no pretension to scientific accuracy and finality.

Before considering the question as to the likelihood of the spread of the Bolshevik movement in this country, it may be well to inquire precisely what Bolshevism is. There seems to be a deal of ignorance and misapprehension concerning this subject on the part of Americans. In general, Bolshevism is simply a Russian phase of revolutionary socialism. The essence of socialism is the proposal to substitute for the present industrial system, based on private ownership of capital, individual enterprise and personal responsibility for the maintenance of one's self and family, a new order founded on the collective ownership of all material instruments of production and distribution, public enterprise and social responsibility for the maintenance of all individuals brought into the world. The Socialists propose that private competing capital shall be transformed into one collective social capital. The wealth produced through socialized industry would then be distributed according to some fixed standard or principle of remuneration, not by way of free competition as at present. Concerning the method of distribution that should be adopted Socialists are not agreed, some favoring equality, either absolute or approximate; others advocating remuneration according to services rendered, and others favoring the apportionment of the social product according to needs. Under a socialistic régime all railroads and other agencies of transportation and communication, all factories, farms and mines, all banks, mercantile establishments and insurance companies would be owned and operated by the state, or society, acting through agencies created for this purpose, and all workers would be employed and remunerated by such collective agencies.

### The Demands of Bolshevism

Bolshevism stands for the immediate inauguration of socialism. The term Bolshevism was first used in 1903 at a convention of the Russian Social Democratic party, when upon a test vote the party divided between the majority and the minority. The majority party was nicknamed the "Bolshevik" and the minority the "Menshevik," the terms being derived from the Russian words Bolshinstvo and Menshinstvo, meaning, respectively, majority and minority.

Prior to the rise of Bolshevism, the Socialist movement throughout Europe had taken on a somewhat moderate, opportunist character. The leaders of the majority Socialist party in the different states pursued a policy of compromise and cooperation with other political parties and with existing institutions. The socialism that they represent was evolutionary and educational in character. They admitted that the masses were not yet ready for the introduction of the socialized organization of industry and believed that the establishment of socialism must wait upon a process of educational and preparatory propaganda.

The Bolsheviks rejected this Fabian type of socialism. They demanded that the socialistic state be installed at once; that the ownership of land and capital be transferred immediately from the existing proprietors to the working masses, and that revolutionary tactics be substituted for educational propaganda and political compromise.

The Bolshevik programme has actually been carried into effect, at least in large part, throughout Russia. It is not generally known that to-day the industries of Russia are already socialized; that private capital has been expropriated, and that both manufacture and agriculture are conducted by organizations created and controlled by workers themselves.

The process by which the transition from the capitalistic to the socialistic régime took place in Russia is extremely interesting. The movement started

locally with workmen's shop committees, which assumed control of the factories when the old monarchical régime collapsed. At the time of this collapse the superintendents of the factories, most of which had been taken over by the government for war purposes, fled from their posts and the factories closed down for a time. The workers, finding it necessary to work in order to live, got together and formed workmen's shop committees to run the factories. These committees soon found that brains were needed for the task of industrial management and they called in experts to direct the work under the control of the committees. A crude scheme of coöperation, with interchange of products between different industrial communities, was gradually established. At the same time, the movement thus begun by the workmen's shop committees was brought under centralized control, exercised through the Soviet government. A similar movement ran its course on the land among the agricultural laborers, who formed peasants' committees to take over the ownership of land and the direction of agriculture. It is interesting to note that this transformation took place largely under the pressure of economic necessity, in consequence of the breakdown of the old political and industrial system.

### The Soviet Machine at Work

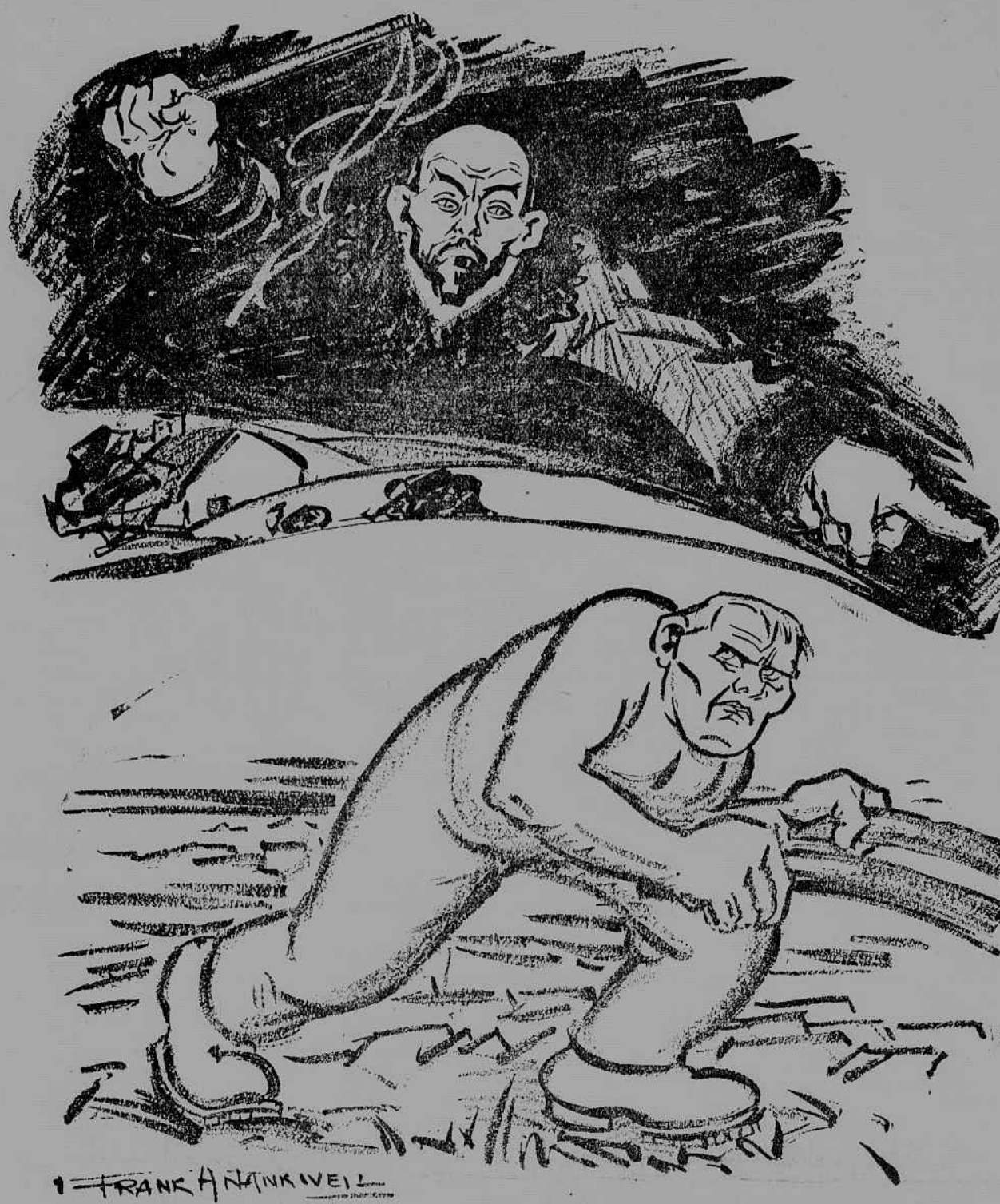
The Soviet government, which was established through the successful Bolshevik revolution of November, 1917, is based on a series of popular assemblies, local, provincial and central. There is a joint Soviet of soldiers' and workers' deputies in every town, the principle of representation being one representative to every 500 population. The various wards in the towns also have Soviets. The representatives are elected by equal suffrage and secret ballot. There is full right of immediate recall on the part of constituents. The representation in the Soviet thus registers the changing sentiment or mood of the masses of the population. Above the local Soviets of the towns and the villages, some of which have peasant Soviets, stand the Soviets of the provinces and counties. Finally, there is the central All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which is made up of delegates from the provincial Soviets, elected in proportion of one delegate to every 25,000 population. The All-Russian Soviet elects a central executive committee of about three hundred members, which is the Parliament of Russia. This parliament in turn elects Peoples' Commissars, who constitute the Cabinet or Ministry. The chairman of the Commissars is Nikolai Lenine, who thus plays the rôle of Prime Minister.

The emphasis in the work of the Soviet government is placed on what is termed an "economic government"—that is, the organization and management of industry—rather than on purely political administration.

The "economic government" is supervised by a Council of Public Welfare. This is a body of experts, selected for their preëminence in the different fields of industry. The membership of the council includes, for example, the leading experts in electrical engineering, industrial chemistry, textile manufacture, steel fabrication and so on. The utilization of technical experts in the Russian socialistic organization is perhaps its most distinctive and significant feature.

### Features of Capitalism Drawn In

The impression prevails generally in this country that Bolshevism is a wholly destructive movement, which spends itself in killing, wrecking and pillaging. But the movement has also its constructive phase, which should not be overlooked by any one who wishes to understand it thoroughly and appraise it fairly. In a statement concerning the problems and the aims of the Soviet government issued recently by Nikolai Lenine, under the title of "The Soviets at Work," the problem of construction is emphasized as the most important and difficult task confronting the new government. He distinguishes three problems which the Bolshevik party had to meet. The first lay in convincing the majority of the population that its programme and policies were correct. The second was the conquest of political power and the suppression of resistance of the supporters of the old régime. The third problem, which he characterized as the most urgent, was to organize the management of Russia. "At present," he says, "this has become the central problem. We, the Bolshevik party, have convinced Russia. We have won Russia from the rich for the poor, from the exploiters for the toilers. And now it is up to us to manage Russia."



### The New Freedom!

As vitally essential to the solution of this problem he urges two things: First, the need of employing experts, and, second, the importance of strict universal accounting and control of production and distribution with a view to increasing the productivity of labor.

With respect to the employment of experts he states: "Without the direction of specialists of different branches of knowledge, technique and experience, the transformation toward socialism is impossible, for socialism demands a higher productivity of labor in comparison with capitalism and on the basis which has been attained by capitalism."

In this connection he justifies the payment of very high remuneration for the services of "the biggest of the bourgeois specialists," at least during the transition period. This is extremely significant. The leader of Russian socialism, confronted with the task of industrial organization and management, has been forced to recognize the truth, hitherto generally overlooked or ignored by Socialists, that talent and genius will hardly render their indispensable services to society if deprived of their proportionately high rewards. The policy of the Soviet government in this respect has been criticised and attacked both outside and inside the Socialist ranks. But Lenine declares: "We will go ahead trying very cautiously and patiently to test and discover real organizers, people with sober minds and practical sense who combine loyalty to socialism with ability to organize quietly (and in spite of confusion and noise) efficient and harmonious joint work of a large number of people under the Soviet organization."

### But No Escape From Discipline

The advocacy of accounting and control to increase the productivity of labor in the Lenine pronouncement is equally interesting. He declares that the slogan, "Keep accurate and conscientious accounts; conduct business economically; do not loaf; do not steal; maintain strict discipline at work," which have always been ridiculed by revolutionary Socialists, have now become an urgent and practical slogan. He tells his followers that "without thorough state accounting and control of production and distribution the authority of the toilers, and their freedom, cannot last, and a return to the yoke of capitalism is inevitable."

More definitely he announces: "We should immediately introduce piece work and try it out in practice. We should try out every scientific and progressive suggestion of the Taylor system; we should compare the earnings with the general total of production or the exploitation results of railroad and water transportation and so on." He goes even so far as to concede that the effort to increase the productivity of labor through such measures "will require the use of compulsion so that the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat should not be weakened by the practice of a too mild proletarian government." In this connection he offers a vigorous defence of the courts, as essential to the rule of the proletariat and the maintenance

of proper training in discipline. "There is," he states, "a lack of appreciation of the simple and obvious fact that, if the chief misfortunes of Russia are famine and unemployment, these misfortunes cannot be overcome by any outbursts of enthusiasm, but only by thorough and universal organization and discipline, in order to increase the production of bread for men and fuel for industry, to transport it in time and to distribute it in the right way. That therefore responsibility for the pangs of famine and unemployment falls on every one who violates the labor discipline in any enterprise and in any business. That those who are responsible should be discovered, tried and punished without mercy."

It appears from these remarkable utterances of Lenine that socialism, confronted in Russia for the first time with the problem of industrial organization and administration, has been forced to resort to the same measures for maintaining social order and discipline which the Socialists have assailed so bitterly when applied under the present system. The critics of socialism have often declared that attempts to realize it must result either in the breakdown of the industrial machinery from the lack of sufficient motives for productive effort on the part of workers or in the establishment of an intolerable industrial tyranny. They reasoned that if the great economic motive of desire for gain and the stimulus of competition were removed men could be kept at work only by calling into play on a great scale the motive of fear of punishment, applied by rigorous compul-

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sion to work. This criticism finds striking confirmation in the Lenine plea for a socialistic dictatorship. It remains to be seen whether the rank and file of his followers will stand for the sort of compulsory industrial régime that he advocates.

### What of the United States?

The question as to the prospects of a sweeping Bolshevik movement in the United States now remains to be considered. At this writing the movement seems to be gaining control of the German cities through the ascendancy of the Spartacus wing of the Social Democratic party led by Karl Liebknecht. A complete victory for Bolshevism in Austria and Germany was predicted some time ago by an Austrian press correspondent, who studied on the ground the rise and spread of Bolshevism in Russia. This observer told the writer that it was almost certain that the movement would sweep everything before it, not only in the Teutonic countries, but also in Italy, and would make large gains in France and England. He based this prediction largely on his knowledge of the spread of the Bolshevik propaganda among the soldiers of the Teutonic and Allied armies. The American soldiers, by the way, this informant thought, had thus far been practically immune to the revolutionary propaganda emanating from Russia. This prediction suggests the disquieting possibility of a new alignment in Europe, which might find the United States in an alliance fighting against the Socialist republics.

The prophecy has been made in some quarters that the Bolshevik movement, after sweeping through Europe, will spread naturally and inevitably to the United States. The grounds for this belief appear to be the tendency of any revolutionary movement to spread with wildfire rapidity at a time like the present, when the restraining forces of conservative public opinion and established social standards have been unsettled and weakened through influences set in motion by the war; the insistence upon the claims of labor, which, having won large gains during the war period, will not allow itself to be forced back to the old level of wages, hours and conditions of employment, but will rather press on for new and larger concessions; the counter resistance on the part of capital which may be expected to demand the restoration of terms of employment that will offer a larger margin for profit; and the pressure of the increasing cost of living, which must produce widespread discontent and readiness to resort to revolutionary social panaceas for relief. When one considers these conditions and tendencies, the prospect of a Bolshevik uprising of the United States might seem hardly remote.

But there are other considerations bearing on this question, which, upon deeper reflection, point to an opposite conclusion. In the first place, the peculiar conditions that produced the sudden rise and spread of Bolshevism in Russia are not present in the United States. There the opportunity for Bolshevism, as has been pointed out, came through the collapse of the monarchical system and the industrial organization which depended upon it for support. The Workmen's Shop Committees came into existence and were able to assume the control of industries in which they were employed, because the owners and managers of these industries, as well as the government itself, had abdicated. Indeed, it may be said that the success of the Bolsheviks in this phase came about through the pressure of economic necessity. No such condition exists in this country. On the contrary, the organization of American industry to-day probably rests upon a firmer basis of efficiency and equity than at any previous time in the national history.

### Hard Going for Revolutions Here

Not only are the chaotic conditions of governmental and industrial organization, which gave Bolshevism its opportunity in Russia, not present in the United States, but there are certain factors at work here which must tend to block the path of Bolshevism on this side of the Atlantic. The nation has just emerged from the conduct of a brilliantly successful war. The national mood, made jubilant and exultant by victory, is not likely to be hospitable or receptive to revolutionary foreign propaganda. The countries in which Bolshevism has thus far made its great gains were all losers in the great war. There can be no doubt that in Germany chagrin of defeat is a potent factor in the present drift toward revolutionary socialism. In a defeated country social revolution follows naturally as the aftermath of an unsuccessful war. In this country the high

elation of military success is a psychological barrier to the importation of Bolshevik doctrines.

It is not to be forgotten, moreover, that the American spirit has always been hostile to revolutionary socialism. The average American instinctively prefers the principles of private property and private enterprise, individual initiative and individual independence, personal freedom and personal responsibility, upon which our present social order are founded, to the theories of public ownership, collective control and social responsibility which lie at the basis of socialism. In the past, moreover, Americans have been too prosperous in the main to pay much attention to schemes of social reconstruction. In the last two decades, to be sure, the rise of the cost of living and the consequent unrest have made a favorable opportunity for Socialist propaganda.

The increase in the Socialist vote at successive elections registered the effect of these conditions. In the recent election, however, the Socialist vote receded to a marked extent. Every one of the twelve Socialists who ran for Congress in New York City was defeated and the only Socialist member of Congress running for reelection was rejected by an emphatic majority. In the country at large only one Socialist candidate for Congress was successful. Thus far socialism in this country has made no substantial progress toward convincing the American people of the expediency and justice of its programme and capturing the political power for its realization, which, according to Lenine, are the two preliminary goals of the revolutionary Socialist movement.

Another obstacle in the path of Bolshevism in this country is the powerful influence of the majority of the American Federation of Labor and its great national leaders, Samuel Gompers, John Mitchell and others. Socialism has failed in repeated efforts to capture the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, and until it takes this stronghold it can hardly make any real progress toward the conquest of American voters at large.

Finally, the influence of the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, must be set down as another powerful deterrent to the expansion of Bolshevism in America. There is probably no country in which the Church exercises so direct and potent an influence on public opinion and political programmes as it does in the United States. The Catholic Church has conducted an organized and well directed propaganda against socialism. The various Protestant bodies are equally antagonistic to its teachings.

### The Forces of Order

The foregoing brief survey discloses that the economic conditions in this country, the national mood emanating from a successful war, the instinctive tendency of the American people, the attitude of organized labor and the influence of the great religious denominations are all unfavorable to the spread of Bolshevism. In view of these conditions it seems most unlikely that the Bolshevik movement in this country will spread to any notable extent or with any alarming rapidity.

In conclusion, it may be pertinent to offer a word of suggestion or caution regarding the policy that should be adopted by the government and its officials, national and state, in dealing with Bolshevism. In the first place, a policy of denunciation, persecution and suppression would defeat its own object and would tend to provoke the growth of the movement rather than to retard it. A revolutionary movement thrives on ill-advised attempts to exterminate it. The surest way to promote the growth of such a movement is to create for it a body of martyrs. In place of such a policy we need one of wise toleration, in harmony with the democratic principles of free speech, free press, free discussion and free criticism. In the second place, measures of legislation should be enacted promptly which will make for a reasonable equalization and improvement of social conditions for the masses of the population. A comprehensive programme of social insurance, which will supplement the accident insurance provided by workmen's compensation laws, with provisions for sickness, invalidity, old age and, possibly, unemployment insurance, is of the first importance here. An equitable distribution of the tax burden, national, state and local, is also fundamental. If the right policy with respect to the treatment of revolutionary propaganda and the enactment of social legislation shall prevail in this country, the menace of Bolshevism, which now looms on the national horizon, will prove to be only a passing phase of the aftermath of the world war.

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